La Petite Maria de Normandie

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La Petite Marie de Normandie

"Little Maria of Normandy"

Cantata Epic for Choir, Orchestra, and Two Accordions

(First three movements only)

I. THE LANDING
II. FUNERAL FOR A FOREVER-DREAMING WARRIOR
III. LA PETITE MARIE DE NORMANDIE

This composition is a thesis presented to the faculty of Western Washington University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Music degree.

Composed 2016-2017

Kathleen L. Kitto, Dean of the Graduate School

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-Charles-John Sanchez Fontillas
May 4th, 2017
La Petite Marie de Normandie

"Little Maria of Normandy"

Cantata Epic for Choir, Orchestra, and Two Accordions
Author Ken Robinson once said that "creativity is putting your imagination to work, and it's produced the most extraordinary results in human culture." I believe this to be undeniable.

In both my childhood and my adulthood I have enjoyed the imagination of others. I was always delighted to see the old Tom and Jerry cartoons from the 1950's and 1960's, I thoroughly enjoyed Disney movies as well as Disney cartoons that were aired on "The Disney Afternoon" in the early 1990's when I was in elementary school. Also, I enjoyed Chuck Palahniuk's story Fight Club as well as a whole variety of anime with various themes, concepts, stories, and characters. Plus, let's not forget my neverending enjoyment of video games from then and now.

These examples above, with the addition of many others, are indeed the extraordinary results in human culture that Ken Robinson mentions. And this all started with the imagination of many individuals. And thanks to imagination being brought to life, it made people feel, and it gave people life-enhancing memories, and inspiration. Some were even inspired enough to utilize their own imaginations and create worlds of their own.

This is the theme that my piece La Petite Marie de Normandie focuses on: imagination.

It is obvious that I applied my imagination to this whole work, using symbolism throughout by using certain composition techniques and various harmonic material. For instance, ascending chords in the strings, piano and celesta to signify going to Heaven, loud cluster chords made by the orchestra are utilized to a 21-gun salute, and the harp is being used to depict how beautiful the titular character is.

Furthermore, my original story that is told in this piece depicts the importance of how an active imagination can be helpful to one's own life.

At the start of this piece, we meet our first character, Second Lieutenant Donald "Dodger" Charleston, an officer of the US Army 2nd Rangers sent to Normandy Beach on June 1944. In the heat of battle, Dodger escapes the line of fire to plant a seed-looking rock beneath the bloodied sand, hoping and praying (in his own manically-induced imagination), that something will grow out of this seed and if found, make someone happy someday in that land of misery. This fictional account on D-Day is presented in the piece's first movement, The Landing.

The Second Lieutenant and eventually retired Lieutenant Colonel Dodger is finally laid to rest at age 95 in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania. Devestated that he lost his playmate in life, his grandson, George Charleston, weeps and is even in denial that his favorite grandfather has passed away. This event and the hereditary trait of vivid imaginations are portrayed in the second movement, Funeral for a Forever-Dreaming Warrior.

Months after his grandfather's funeral, George and his family heads to France for a vacation. One of the places they visit is the same beach that Dodger was 72 years before, fighting for his life and others'. On the beach, lonely little George's imaginative mindset creates the title character, Maria, a tiny angel-like fairy who has the physical and mental maturity of a 30-year-old woman, in his mind, and actually forms an exclusively imaginary, loving, platonic relationship with her in the beginning. He initially "discovers" her in the same seed-like rock his grandfather planted in battle. This scene takes place in the third and titular movement.

Imagination is key to this whole work. And even though this edition only contains the first three movements, the utmost important characters in this story are introduced and solidify the theme of imagination for the whole work.

My overall objective for this music is to send the message that imagination can be a life-saving mental medicine for many. There are thousands, if not, millions, of people who rely on their imagination just to make their days more bearable. Think of the ones who love their favorite comic book characters, musicians (fictional or non-fictional), or storybook characters. This kind of love for people in their mind helps people function positively every day. In my work, George creates a character in his mind that loves him dearly, and it makes him very happy. I believe this counts as taking care of one's self.

To conclude, in the future, the completion of this whole work, which will have 13 additional movements, will portray the struggle of personal maturity and questioning whether or not to hang on to one's imagination or "grow up", due to social pressures. This particular struggle will actually distort one's process of thought and also produce chaotic scenes in the imaginative part of one's mind.

Near the actual end of the 16-movement version of this piece, I will portray the evolution of George's imagination as well as his psychosis he experiences later in his adulthood.

For now, however, enjoy the beginning of this piece involving the process of taking care of one's self through imagination.

Whenever you feel like you are in hell, create some kind of heaven in your head. George does, and it saves his life.

...in the beginning, at least.
Duration: 19 minutes, 40 seconds.

The score is transposed. Please tune to A440.

**Woodwinds**

1 piccolo  
2 flutes  
2 oboes  
1 English horn  
3 B♭ clarinets  
1 B♭ bass clarinet  
1 bassoon  
1 contrabassoon

**Brass**

2 French horns  
2 B♭ trumpets  
2 trombones  
1 euphonium  
1 tuba

**Percussion**

3 percussionists  
- Timpani (Tuning: E2, G2, B3, D3)  
- Percussion I: Snare drum, tam-tam, crash cymbals, vibraphone, glockenspiel, suspended cymbal, mark tree  
- Percussion II: Bass drum, tubular bells, crotales, snare drum, triangle

**Harp**

**Keyboards**

Celesta  
Piano

2 accordions (Seated at the front of the orchestra)

**Choir**

Soprano  
Alto  
Tenor  
Bass

**Strings**

Violin I  
Violin II  
Viola  
Cello  
Contrabass
Here, here lies the warrior of a thousand dreams.